

A New Source of Restoration Cathedral Music in Illinois: Previously Unknown Works by William Turner

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The closing Hallelujah section of Turner's anthem "Try me O God" performed by the WIU Singers. More on this later.

One does not expect to receive an unsolicited seventeenth century manuscript of English church music in the mail, but this is what happened at Western Illinois University (WIU) Macomb, IL, in November, 2010. The packet containing such a manuscript was sent to the School of Music anonymously, the postmark 'Scarboro, ME' being the only clue to the donor's identity. [\[SLIDE](#)

[2\]](#) At face value, the manuscript purport

doubt as to the authenticity of the document. [\[SLIDE 10\]](#) Turner's penmanship was confirmed by John Milsom at Christ Church

While brought into this team through Aldrich connections, I wanted to determine early on what the physical “makeup” or codicology of the manuscript might have to tell us about its origins. The first thing I should say is that the WIU manuscript clearly began its life as a bound book of music paper. This is not unusual in Restoration London, amateur and professional musicians alike regularly purchased books of ruled music paper, much of this commerce flowing through the shop of John Playford, who offered both loose music paper and bound books of it, as indicated by a bookplate found inside the front cover of the WIU manuscript itself [SLIDE 5 & SLIDE 6]: “ALL sorts of the best Dutch Rul’d paper, and all sizes of Rul’d books for Musick, sold by John Playford and Zachariah Watkins their shop in the Inner Temple.” (More on this shortly.)

1665, but a supply of the plates must have been used into the 1670s, due to the paper's Janssen countermark.

Arriving at Western Illinois in a somewhat fragile state, the spine having come apart and its original calf-bound boards rather brittle, the volume has now been handsomely restored and rebound.

The volume's size bespeaks a book intended for some domestic or personal purpose: the prevalence of folio oblong (as opposed to upright) quarto formats among the extant scorebooks of anthems and services from this period suggests copyists preferred wider pages, making continuous copying easier, with fewer stops of the pen. Turner in this case, however, may have been repurposing a book previously owned by someone else. An early inscription, inside the front cover [SLIDE 7](#), suggests the involvement of a Frenchman: "Monsieur de la ~~tile~~ [or "fuite"] de l[a?] m[?]ez i[?]" Who this was and what his relationship to the manuscript might have been cannot be answered at this time, at least ~~it should~~ note that a later owner pasted a partial plain sheet over the original here, cutting out a window so that the bookplate remained visible. [SLIDE 11](#) (1 T Tj (ol)-(eri)-2(s)-1 Tc -0.00e 1 T-1 Tc -0.0h1(1 T T>BDCn13<

clef is not his, and the note shapes, while not completely clear through the pasteover, seem more compressed than Turner's usual practice. This line was crossed out, possibly by Turner himself while preparing to take over use of the book. The rest of the page is from Turner's writing on the other side.

The ascriptions on the title page [\[still SLIDE 10\]](#) inevitably proved to be the starting point for our examination of the music itself. Why not a previously unknown service by Aldrich? After all, most of the manuscript collectors in the eighteenth century and after believe this ascription was added some years after Turner's copying was completed by well-educated connoisseurs, who often got these things right. If we look carefully, we see two layers of writing on the title page: "In Dr. Turner's handwriting" is written over a partially erased line, possibly reading (though this is mostly my conjecture) "transcribed by Dr. Aldrich." Someone who knew Turner's hand, but who was unable to help with the correction of the service, partially improved the information on this page, which Bumpus in his History repeated, apparently uncritically. As we will shortly see, the answer here lies not so much in eliminating Aldrich's chances as the composer of the service, but, rather, in making the case for it being Turner's work. That said, my first impression of the service was that it was relatively free of the idiosyncrasies I associate with Aldrich's efforts; this was music, in my opinion, by a traditionally educated composer (which Aldrich was not). Further, considering how comprehensively and carefully Aldrich preserved his works at Christ Church, I could only imagine him completing a service and then neglecting to include it in his own manuscript. As for the two anthems, we should note before going further that there is no question of Turner's authorship, given his signature

end of each. Significantly, Behold now praise the Lord is an otherwise unknown work, and Try me, O God has a final “hallelujah,” unique to this source.

SHARPE, contd.

The most compelling evidence for Turner’s authorship of the entire manuscript was proposed by Nicholas Temperley at the WIU Symposium. Intrigued by the corrections on the first page of the Te Deum

is its companion anthem³ (Turner provided companion anthems to at least two other services). It is conceivable, then, that the signature that follows the first anthem lays claim to all the music preceding it.

Geoffrey Webber, of Gonville and Caius, Cambridge, who directed the only CD recording exclusively devoted to works by Turner, is confident that the service is by him.⁴ Among other things he points to the similarity between the Jubilate in F and the one in E, and particularly at the phrase “and into his courts with praise” [SLIDE 14]. This is nothing more than a triad, of course, but it is significant that it would have struck his aural memory.

Guessing a date or place for this service is more problematical than its authorship. Of the surviving 6 services by Turner, the three associated with the opening of St. Paul’s (in A, D, and E) are full with verse, as is the St. Cecilia service in D. Our service and the setting of the Sanctus and Gloria in G are full throughout. Of Turner’s fifty or so extant anthems, only five are full. He was a highly skilled composer writing mainly verse and symphony anthems for the Chapel Royal and full with verse anthems and services for the newly built St. Paul’s. Bryan White’s stylistic assessment of the Service in F presented at the Symposium, drew attention to a number of traits that were ‘out of sync’ with the cluster of 1690’s services and led him to favor an earlier date. His observations included: less sensitive and more schematic contrapuntal writing, some awkward progressions, less sensitive word setting, absence of “English” cadences, and lack of variety in texture. Indeed, the Service in F seems to conform to the characteristics of the short service defined by Spink as those that composers attempted to revive in the 1660s: four parts

³ John Milsom, email message to author, April 6, 2011.

⁴ Geoffrey Webber, email message to author, October 15, 2012.

of factors suggest a connection to the music manuscripts of the Filmer family, Kentish nobility for whom Charles II established a baronetcy, in 1674, in recognition of Sir Robert Filmer's loyalty to the throne during the Civil War. At Yale University since 1946, the Filmer music manuscripts—the Filmers served as music patrons and encouraged their children's musical pursuits—have yet to receive comprehensive scholarly attention, although Gregory Oehm's 2012 thesis on Turner includes a careful reconsideration of the Filmer connection, strengthening a case (made by others) that Turner served as a music tutor to more than one generation of Filmer children, a reasonable surmise given that Turner's handwriting appears in various Filmer manuscripts, at times copying music intended, it seems, for pedagogical purposes. As noted above, the WIU manuscript's upright quarto format gives it the appearance of a domestic volume and like various Filmer manuscripts it was started by one copyist and taken up by another. The bit of French writing on the inside cover may also indicate a connection, since the Filmers seem to have had unusual, early access to the works of Lully.

Turner may have therefore taken over a lightly used Filmer volume, some years after its manufacture, carefully copying in it a service and two anthems for the purpose of transmission or presentation. This would further explain how the book strayed from the Filmer collection.

Oehm, who learned of the WIU manuscript late in his thesis research, shows that the form of Turner's signature in the WIU manuscript is closest to that of Filmer 17, a volume Turner demonstrably used from the 1690s into the 1710s. This is additional support to Rod's conclusion that the four-voice Service in F may well be a product of the first years of the eighteenth century. Beyond concerns about theatricality in church music, it may be that the vast acoustical space of the new Baul's required some rethinking of the composition of service

music and a return to its stylistic roots.